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# AN 'IMĀRAH IN THE CENTRAL RIF: THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO SĪDĪ BŪ KHIYĀR

ANNUAL pilgrimages, or *'imārāt* (sing. *'imārah*), to the tombs of certain saints are a major feature not only of the saint cult in Morocco, but of Maghribi Islam in general. A few of these, such as the *Naskhah*, occurring on 15 Sha'bān, to the shrine of Mūlāi 'Abd al-Salām ibn Mshīsh in Banī 'Arūs in the Jbālah, or the visits to the sepulchres of Mūlāi Idrīs in Zarhūn or Sīdī Muḥammad ibn 'Aisā in Meknes, are events to which the faithful gather from all over the country. Seven successive pilgrimages to the tombs both of Mūlāi Idrīs and Mūlāi 'Abd al-Salām equal, according to Moroccans, one to Mecca. The pilgrimage in these instances is supplemented by the activities of members of, variously, the Haddāwa (at Mūlāi 'Abd al-Salām), 'Aisāwa or Ḥamādsha (in Meknes) brotherhoods, who smoke *kif* (*Cannabis indica*, a narcotic not unlike marijuana), beat drums, chew and swallow live coals, put skewers through their cheeks and work themselves into a frenzy in order to identify themselves with the spirit of the saint with whose tomb they are associated; and, if possible, to merge with the Infinite.

There are many other saints, however, mostly of a more local and less national character, whose devotees show far more restraint in their behavior than the members of the brotherhoods mentioned above. One of these is Sīdī Bū Khiyār, buried in the southern mountains of the Central Rifian tribe of Aith Wariyāghir; and nothing like the above occurs at the annual pilgrimage to his tomb, for the members of these orders are held in very low repute in the Rif and are not encouraged to come there. A description of this pilgrimage, wich I witnessed on 1 August 1955, is, I think, of ethnographic interest not only for its own sake but because of the light it sheds on the Berber attitude toward Islam.

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788 Sīdī Bū Khiyār («My Lord the Father of the Cucumber») was,
718 according to tradition, an itinerant *murābiṭ* or holy man from the
792 Sahara who reached the Central Rif completely destitute, without
173 family, servants or possessions. Of when this event occurred, or from what part of the Sahara he originated, we have absolutely no indication. Rifians today say that he was not a *sharīf* (pl. *shurfā*), or descendant of the Prophet, and this is negatively and locally confirmed by the fact that no mention is made of him in the genealogies of the Imrabdhen section (*ar-rba'* or *thakhammasth*, according to the context) of the tribe (*thaqbītsh*) of Aith Wariyāghir, who, despite their sobriquet, are shurfā descended from Sīdī Ibrāhīm al-A'raj («My Lord Abraham the Lame»), whose own lineage ascends to Mūlāi Idrīs. We may note here, parenthetically, that although the Rifians make a genealogical and functional distinction between *shurfā* and *murābiṭīn* (pl. of *murābiṭ*), they do not differentiate between them terminologically; in the Rifian dialect of Berber, both are called *imrābdhen*, derived from Arabic *murābiṭīn*.

778 In any event, Sīdī Bū Khiyār was to become far more important
788 in the religious aspects of tribal life than most of the Imrābdhen. for no organized visits have ever been made to any of the latters' tombs. After settling on the windswept and desolate mountain peak which bears his name, Sīdī Bū Khiyār became famous as a spellbinder who could attract crowds of lesser murābiṭīn from as far as ten to fifteen days' journey away. He never married, and he died without issue on his mountain top; but the name Bū Khiyār is one wich many mountain Rifians are given to this day.

788 The pilgrimage to Sīdī Bū Khiyār's grave is today a local fes-
718 tival entirely, albeit the most important and significant one in the
575 Central Rif. The only religious brotherhood involved is that of the
795 'Alawiyyīn, a recently formed order of Algerian origin, whose members bear no relationship to the saint other than the fact that some of them happen to live in the area, and whose litany is a far more toned-down and sedate affair than those of any of the orders mentioned above, as we shall see.

778 The tomb of Sīdī Bū Khiyār is situated on the summit which
133 overlooks the Turīrth-Timarzga-Aith 'Ammarth Pass and dominates the massif of the Jbil Ḥamām, The Mountain of Doves, which, at

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canvas tents in the Market of the Righteous, as they would do in any ordinary tribal market (*sūq*). They sell just the same articles, from clothing and bill-hooks (I purchased two of the latter here) to soap and matches, as they do in the regular markets, and some of them also sell sheep to be ritually slaughtered for the 'Aid al-Kabīr on the following day. As in a normal market, also, men and women remain sharply segregated.

Among the pilgrims are numerous *ṭulbā* or students of the Qur'ān, who, after visiting the tomb, where they recite the Holy Book from beginning to end, proceed to the Market of the Righteous to ask the faithful for contributions (*ma'rūf*), which are placed in a box beside the tomb put there for the purpose. The money is later counted up by the tribal authorities and divided equally among all the ṭulbā attending (1).

The 'imārah of Sīdī Bū Khiyār has also, within the last two decades, become a focal point in the activities of the local members of the brotherhood of the 'Alawiyyīn, who maintain a not insignificant following in Timarzga and Aith 'Arūs, although they do not have a lodge in either of these districts. After paying their respects to the saint, they congregate for their *miima'*, or reunion, at a spot between the ādhān grove and the mosque. Here, for an hour and a half to two hours, they go through the litany (*dhikr*) required by their order. This consists of a constant repetition of the formula *Lā ilāha illā 'llāh*, «There is no god but God», over and over, while the brethren are standing in a circle. The litany is followed by the *'imrah*, a form of rhythmic breathing designed to induce ecstasy: and the 'imrah of the 'Alawiyyīn (the word is *not* to be confused with *'imārah*) progresses through the following routines, in which the underlined and accented vocalizations denote outgo, and the non-underlined ones, intake, of breath:

(1) In 1955, there were 99 ṭulbā from the Ibil (Timarzga-Turīrh, Aith 'Arūs) of Aith Warivāghir, who collected 717.75 pesetas: 96 from Aith 'Abd Allāh of Aith Warivāghir, who collected 696.00 ptas.; 87 from Aith 'Ammarth, who got 630.75 ptas.; 75 from Aith Bū 'Ayyāsh of Aith Warivāghir, who got 471.25 ptas.; 39 from Aith Hadhīfah of Aith Warivāghir, who received 282.75 ptas.; 15 from Imṭābdhen of Aith Warivāghir, who got 108.75 ptas.; and 10 from Igzinnāven, who received 72.50 ptas. Total ṭulbā attending were 421, and total money collected was 2990.25 pesetas.

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A) Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! 788

B) Hunh! Hunh! Húnh! Húnh! Hunh! Hunh! Húnh! Húnh! 781

C) Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! Hunh! Húnh! 575 195

D) Same as B) above. 778

E) Same as C) above.

When I arrived at Sīdī Bū Khiyār, about noon, the show which the 'Alawiyyīn put on was just ending, so I unfortunately saw almost nothing of it. What little I did see, while trying to peer over the heads of the crowd that had collected, indicated that the 'Alawī litany and ritual, which is performed without the use of drums or musical instruments of any kind, is an energetic and muscular affair, which keeps its practitioners in good physical condition; for they were all jumping up into the air to the accompaniment of the breathing routines given above. It was, however, a very far cry from the howling and self-flagellation indulged in by the 'Aisāwa and Ḥamādsha to induce trances. Furthermore, after the 'Alawi litany was over, all the participants got up and went about their business without further ado; no one seemed to be recovering from the effects of a self-induced trance. It had merely been good healthy exercise.

Of even greater interest, perhaps, was the attitude of the crowd, [771] one of mild curiosity followed by almost complete indifference, an attitude which not only marks the Rifian's outlook on religious brotherhoods in general, for he is not apt to join them, but toward most features of alien cultures which he has no desire to assimilate.

After the ṭulbā have finished collecting their ma'rūf, and the 788 'Alawiyyīn have terminated their ritual, the whole having lasted 778 some two to three hours, the pilgrims all perform their ablutions [783] prior to prayer. Some have, in the meantime, and for their own pleasure, visited the pinnacle of Tamrābiṭ; there seems to be nothing particularly meritorious in so doing, for the holiest feature of the point is its name, although it may once have been of some ceremonial significance.

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The common prayer, held on the flat prayer site just below 788 Sīdī Bū Khiyār's tomb, is the focal point of the 'imārah. It is led by 782

592
593 The mother has the right to punish her children, but cannot wound them.

[562] Sons enjoy a preferential situation within the family; they help their father in agricultural tasks and in defense of the hearth and patrimony. They watch over the women of the house. Those of age
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[785] (i.e. who have reached puberty)[46] start to fast during the month of Ramadan, as well as starting to plow and harvest the crops, after they have become too old to pasture goats. On reaching puberty, also, sons may spend nights away from home or be absent for periods of time.
[584] They do not own property. If a son should reject the matrimonial proposition (put to him by his father) he must look for the bride-price (himself), telling his father of this obligation. He may leave his home without having to renounce his inheritance. After marriage,
885
593 although living in his father's house, he builds a bread-oven in
[591] order to separate his meals from those of his father. He is then a contributor (apart from his father, who generally hands land over to him to work, but who is not obliged to give him his share of the
[594] inheritance.) He pays his fines, and contributes his turn to the fqih's barley allotment, and forms a separate nubth on his own.
883
885 On reaching puberty, he attends the mosque and goes to markets and
623 weddings; when he marries, he begins to take part in the council
616 meetings to defend his rights; he enters a liff[47]; and sometimes he
794 becomes a member of a religious brotherhood[48].
575 Sons and daughters are their father's property. A divorced
593 wife, even though nursing a child, cannot take it with her; and there
586 have been cases in which her own father has returned her children to her husband.

788 cemetery of Sidi Malik in the community of Had Ruadi in the tribe
778 of Iboyyia in the summer of 1966. They had come from the frac-
435 tion of Arba Taurirt in the Beni Wariyaghar. At least one of the
[755] pilgrims was ill, presumably suffering from the effects of the
[754] evil eye or a djnoun, one of the most prevalent causes for visit-
ing a holy place. The group had left Arba on the seven o'clock
[494] bus for Alhucemas where they had taken another bus to Had Ruadi,
[782] where they spent the night. Four chickens were brought and killed
at the tomb. The next day they returned to Arba by way of
Alhucemas. The cost of the journey itself can be calculated
fairly closely. Each person had to pay 5 dirhams to go from
Arba to Alhucemas and an additional 3 dirhams to go from Alhucemas
to Had. There was an expense of 8 dirhams to make the trip and
another 8 to return, or 16 dirhams ($3.20) for each person. The
chickens can roughly be priced at 10 dirhams apiece, or having a
cash value of $8.00. The total expense for the group was at
least $45, a not inconsiderable outlay of cash and goods, espe-
cially if we recall Waterson's per capita output of the fellah
family is $60. If this were a mere isolated instance such expense
would be negligible in terms of the entire society. The pilgrim-
age is, however, part of the texture of Rif society and such
instances form the pattern rather than the exception.

792 Some of the more ambitious holy men and their followers
794 have set up rather unique firms, the religious brotherhood, a
575 form of voluntary association of such prominence in north Africa.
(A detailed account of one such order is given by Evans-Pritchard,

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792 794 575 [778] [554] 1949.) Not all holy men have formed brotherhoods although all founders of brotherhoods are regarded as holy men, the font of the association being the baraka possessed by its initiator. These brotherhoods generally emanated from some charismatic leader whose own brand of revelation attracted local adherents.

792 794 775 575 Once the spiritual and magical qualities of the saint have been proven, his brotherhood grows. This, of course, tends to be circular since growing membership validifies the founder's abilities. New lodges or zawiya are founded, to be administered by the holy man's more capable and loyal disciples. As the cult grows the leader, as a result of his personal mediations with Allah, pronounces a new set of spiritual techniques and strictures in addition to the usual ones followed by all adherents to Islam. A new set of practices to attain communion with God [779] in the form of special uses of the rosaries, scarification, physical contortions and manner of praying may be introduced along with taboos on smoking, dancing or drinking coffee.

792 794 575 These religious associations are for the most part voluntary although there tends to be a familial association whereby a son belongs to the same lodge his father belonged to. Although they tend to be highly political there has been, to the best of my knowledge, no correlation between a particular brotherhood and a particular tribe. Perhaps the diversity of membership in competing brotherhoods reflects the fragmentation of loyalty within the tribes and fractions. At the turn of the century the Darkawiya cult was dominant in the Rif. A former member of this

792 brotherhood, Shaikh Ahmad al-'Alawi (1869-1934) broke off from
794 the organization to form his own association which is now the
575 largest in the Rif. According to informant estimate, this brotherhood holds about 50% of those Berbers in the Rif who belong to brotherhoods. Its annual meeting which I attended in 1965 consisted of several thousand brothers from all parts of the Rif and from neighboring Algeria where the mother lodge is located.

792 The importance of these fraternal orders declined to a
794 certain extent during the struggle for Moroccan independence
575 because of their anti-nationalistic behavior. When they are
178 criticized in the Rif it is not on theological grounds but political. The brotherhoods have been accused of accepting
[662] bribes in order to influence their membership on how to vote in local elections and to act as spies for the government. Their cogency has also been reduced by the increase in secular as opposed to Koranic education. Nonetheless, they have a powerful residual following, as attested by the vehemency with which they are attacked.

792 The fraternity supports itself on the annual contributions
794 in kind extracted as membership fees from its adherents as well
575 as the more or less regular visits to the key shrines and lodges
[124] where, again, donations are expected. The size of this contribution is most difficult to estimate, and my inquiries of lodge officials met with only our mutual exasperation. The amount seems to vary with the avarice of the local lodge, where 10% of

annual income may be claimed. Informants agreed that a figure of 5% of annual income might not be an inaccurate sum for a member to donate to his zariwya.

Aside from these rather special claims on one's sum of wealth are the regular demands made by one's being a member of the Islamic community. Perhaps the most difficult of these obligations for the Riffian is the hadj or pilgrimage to Hijaz, Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed, and to Medina where he died. The hadj itself takes place between the seventh and the thirteenth of the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar, the Dhu 'l-Hijja. While in former days men traveled in caravans or by boat, the most popular form of locomotion today is Air Maroc which offers special rates during the period of the pilgrimage. Although the number of Riffians making the trip is, in any one year, not proportionately large, it is a rather significant group. The investment is large, ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 dirhams, depending on the means of transportation and the time spent in getting there and back. If one has a family, which is generally the case, one must (by law) leave behind enough money to provide for their expenses while the pilgrim is away. Only the older, wealthier (and as a consequence most respected) Berbers can become al-Hadj, the honorific title bestowed on those who have completed the journey to Mecca. The trip is not, however, completely voluntary. If a man is prominent and in the minds of the populace of the community well-off, there is a good deal of pressure placed on him, in the form of ridicule, gossip and general public disapproval, if he begs off the pilgrimage.